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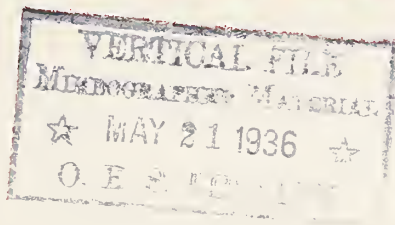
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OLD VIRGINIA HAM

While a Virginian will tell you that there's no other ham quite like a real old Virginia country ham, sugar cured and smoked over hard wood, then stored for a year or more to mellow, an old ham in any part of the country may be cooked the same way as a Virginia ham with good results.

One Virginia housewife says: "Some people soak a ham a long time to get the salt out, but I put it on in cold water and let it come slowly to a boil. Then I throw that water away and start again in fresh cold water. I simmer a 9 or 10-pound ham about 5 hours, or until the bones come out of the hock end. Then, for firmness of texture, I let it cool in its own cooking liquor. Before I bake it, I take off the rind and cover the ham with a mixture of brown sugar, vinegar, cloves, and paprika. I don't use whole cloves because they interfere with carving. It is nicely browned in about 10 minutes. We always serve the ham cold."

This housewife likes potatoes and slaw with the ham, but also occasionally serves greens, broccoli, or cabbage with it, and sweet-potatoes or rice instead of white potatoes. She likes a light dessert after a ham dinner, such as fruit cup or lemon snow. In some parts of Virginia one meets the regular southern "hog n' hominy" combination,

boiled grits or "big hominy" (samp) with the ham. Virginian ideas of good relishes to go with ham include cider and raisin sauce, mustard pickles, broiled canned peaches, or fried pineapple.

Sometimes after soaking in cold water 2 days, a Virginia ham is baked from start to finish at a very low temperature, 250° F, for 30 minutes to the pound. When tender it is covered with the sugar paste and browned.

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